



Letter from the Directors

Dear Chellis/GSFS Community,

We write this at the start of a New Year and in the midst of a typically busy academic one. There is so much that has happened in the world and the world of Chellis/GSFS since we last spoke.

In the world, the continued rise of a global political right—rooted in both misogynist and racially supremacist rhetoric and policies, the largest immigrant crisis in history with 65 million people now living as refugees, and seemingly endless conflict, including masculinist posturing between the U.S. and North Korea that could result in nuclear war and the end of humanity, signal that there is so much feminist work, both academic and activist, to be done.

In the US, structural racism resulting in both mass incarceration and rising maternal mortality for Black and Brown Americans, a rising white supremacist movement that brought torch holding hordes to Charlottesville, a mass opiate crisis causing white life expectancy to decline for the first time in decades and continued violence against women, LGBTQ populations, and Jewish and Muslim populations are enough that even the most optimistic among us are losing hope.

Here at Middlebury, fractious disagreements over who has a right to speak and who has a right to be heard have left many of us divided on issues of free speech, symbolic violence, institutional racism, and how best to respond.

On a very personal level, we have lost so many important people this year, including our incredibly supportive friend of many years, Drue Gensler, and our beloved colleague in the Spanish & Portuguese Department, Juana Gamero de Coca, and Stan Bates, professor emeritus of philosophy.

It is enough to make even the most optimistic feminist despair. And yet, there are serious reasons to be hopeful. 2017's #metoo movement and Time's Up signal what might just be the end of sexual harassment at work. Although Tarana Burke started Me Too in 1997 as a way to help the primarily poor and Black girls with whom she worked get the resources they needed to recover, it exploded when Hollywood celebrities began to retweet it in response to the allegations against movie-mogul Harvey Weinstein. The infusion of celebrity glitz, and perhaps a sense that enough is enough with men grabbing

women's most intimate body parts and having no consequences for such behavior, saw feminism explode in a way that can only be described as world-changing. Powerful men who had abused their power lost their jobs in a variety of industries including Congress, the news media and Silicon Valley. And feminism moved #metoo from a moment to a movement. Many feminists quickly pointed out that #metoo had appropriated a Black feminist's work and used it to protect the most privileged category of all: Hollywood stars. Instead of getting defensive, #metoo and Time's Up decided they would offer resources to the employees most likely to be sexually harassed without recourse: fast food and farm workers (who are, not coincidentally, primarily Black and Latina). Working with already existing worker's rights groups, Time's Up is raising money to fight legal battles and using its celeb cred to raise awareness. Not unlike the incredibly powerful leadership of Black and queer feminists in Black Lives Matter and the mass Women's Marches last January, this movement signals some sort of sea change from below, a bubbling up of feminist hope in fairly hopeless times. Or if not hope, then at least resistance.

Here in the world of GSFS and Chellis, that feminist resistance is kept going in so many ways. This year's Gensler Family Symposium on Feminism in the Global Context is entitled "Resist! Feminists Respond

to Racism."The speakers, films and other events the week of April 23-27 will focus on the central role that feminism is playing in anti-racist activism and how feminist academic work is a part of that. (Go to <http://sites.middlebury.edu/gensler2018/>) for more information). We have some exciting new courses, including Professor Carly Thomsen's "Feminist Engaged Research" and Laurie Essig's "Men and Masculinities" that we hope will deepen our students' understanding of the world we live in and how to go about studying it. We continue to hold events like a Wikipedia Edit-a-thon, Free Food and Feminism, and Walking Through Resistance to remind ourselves that feminist community and change are possible. A variety of student events, from It Happens Here, Women of Color, Feminist Action at Middlebury, Sister-to-Sister, Brother-to-Brother, and the newly founded Sex Positive Education Student Style (SPECS) continue the sense that finding solutions to global and local problems requires both research and action, art and expression, and, as always, a bit of fun.

We hope you'll join us for one of our upcoming events, take one of our classes, or just stop by Chellis if you have an idea or a question about who we are and what we do and how you can be a part of it. And to our growing network of Feminist alums out there, drop us a line or better yet, come for a visit.



Best wishes for the spring semester,

Laurie Essig
Director of GSFS

&

Karin Hanta
Director of Chellis House

A Tribute to Three Cherished Members of Our Community

Over the past few months, GSFS has lost three key members of its community. When I first arrived in Middlebury in 2005 they were each some of the first people I met on campus. Each of them highlighted for me the multifaceted conversations about gender that were ongoing. The academic program and Chellis House would not exist without the inimitable Drue Gensler. An alumna and Board of Trustee member Drue is connected to the most significant initiatives undertaken by the College in addressing gender equity. Her throaty laughter and quips masked the determination with which she helped ensure gender justice was pursued on campus. When funds were needed, she was always generous in her support; women's access to education was an issue that was dear to her. She helped fund Afghan women's education in the US and in Afghanistan; she was

equally supportive of our students' pursuit of research endeavors. Even as Drue helped individual women and our program, her commitment remained firmly entrenched in enabling structural change. She helped initiate various status of women reports and ensured that our presidents were aware of gender concerns at the ground-level. When I directed the program I knew I could always turn to Drue for counsel. The loss of our colleague Juana Gamero de Coca was of a different magnitude. In her scholarship, teaching, and service Juana too was a champion of gender justice. With her focus on the Spanish speaking world, Juana brought an international dimension to our conversations. She espoused a passionate politics that made her a dynamic teacher in the classroom and an important interlocutor on campus conversations. With her infectious smile and stylish

presence Juana enlivened our community. I met her my first week of campus and remember vividly the impassioned discussions we had in the years that followed. I will miss her intellectual brilliance, her vitality and her friendship. Philosophy professor Stan Bates was instrumental in the formation of the women's studies program. Stan was always willing to expand his intellectual horizons; he participated in our reading groups, attended events we organized, and was a familiar presence in the GSFS community. Without his support Middlebury would not have the robust feminist philosophy we have. I will remember his calm presence, his intellectual generosity and his support of feminist scholarship. Farewell comrades.

Sujata Moorti

*Professor of Gender, Sexuality,
and Feminist Studies*

For Drue Gensler, Architect of Gender Justice

We inhabit the house that Drue built. A sturdy house that, like her, was made in the 1930s. A comfy house that makes visitors instantly feel at home. A house that fosters feminist world-making. Drawing on her own private and professional life, Drue knew how to make a house a home. She knew that for

feminist world-making to flourish, we needed a home for our community. She showed us how to overcome challenges with humor. We may laugh, but we still offer our opinion. She also showed us that a house can expand to hold residents from 10,000 miles away. Our Chellis House community now

includes members from Afghanistan and Sweden, from Burma and Ethiopia. And for all this, we will forever be grateful to Drue.

Karin Hanta,

Director of Chellis House



Drue – a staunch advocate
for feminist causes.



Drue always liked a good laugh.

Drue Gensler

Class of '57



Drue at the 10th anniversary celebration of Chellis House in 2014.

Memories of Drue Gensler '57

Faculty, staff and students remember a legend in her own time

Drue Gensler was the real deal. During her years on the Middlebury Board of Trustees, she poured her head, heart, imagination, and resources into making the college a better place for women. I was the first director she hired for Chellis House, where she was a wonderful mentor to us all. She would come by for a brainstorm whenever she was in town, inspiring everyone with her enthusiasm and good sense.

It was during this period that we decided to convene a student, faculty, and staff committee to do the first in-depth examination of the status of women at the college. The administration was not very happy about this project, but Drue was determined that we be able to see it through. She left it up to our committee to get on with it, and helped to ensure that the final report was read, supported, and distributed to the whole campus community by President McCardell and the administration. Its insights and recommendations led to many positive changes for Middlebury women.

Drue was a dynamo without being a diva. She had a clear vision for how women's lives could be better. Over many years, she kept her eye on the big picture, asking the right questions with humor and great humanity. Middlebury will miss her big heart. Her legacy will enrich the lives of students who will never have the opportunity to know her. Thanks, Drue.

Jan Albers,
*first Director of
Chellis House*

As I bring up old files on my computer I've been able to find end-of-the-year letters I wrote to Drue Gensler about the activities of what was then called

Women's and Gender Studies. They reminded me how very interested she was in each and every element of our program (and not only those that directly carried her name). But I don't need those letters to remember how, with a swish of her fantastic clothes and the jangle of her dramatic jewelry, Drue would sweep in with excitement for yet another round of events. And I'm sure I'm not alone in saying that both that elegance and that enthusiasm are sorely missed.

Peggy Nelson, *Professor emerita of Sociology*

Winning the Gensler Thesis Prize was an incredibly meaningful culmination of my time as a GSFS major at Middlebury. Drue Gensler's generosity and passion helped make the GSFS program the strong and intellectually challenging program it is today in the midst of a polarized political climate. I am indebted to her for helping to create and support a space where students could learn from and work with remarkable faculty, discussing topics from queer theory to reproductive politics, from Zumba to postpartum depression.

Sarah Champ '17, *Gensler Thesis Prize winner*



Drue pointing her finger at injustices around the world (with Roman Graf and Paula Schwartz).



Drue's Middlebury College yearbook picture, 1957.

Drue Gensler had an extraordinary impact on the development of Women's and Gender Studies at Middlebury. Intensely interested in helping the program to thrive and grow, Drue offered not only financial resources, but also valuable political support within the trustee and alumni community. Her commitment to the program and its leadership made her a frequent and welcome visitor at many WAGS events, where her large sunglasses and ready laugh made her an instantly recognizable and iconic figure. Drue loved talking with faculty and students about their classes, their experiences, and their ideas for moving the program forward. She was a true friend to WAGS and I am sure will be greatly missed.

Alison Byerly, *President of Lafayette College, formerly Professor of English at Middlebury College*

As someone interested in feminist concerns, you often live in a gaslit, academic intersection where you are asked to question your reality and lived experience. During my senior year, I was awarded the Gensler Thesis Prize for my multi-semester thesis, which explored restorative justice as a feminist response to campus sexual misconduct. Throughout my time at Middlebury, I experienced problems but

felt a consistent stark denial from many of those around me. Winning the Gensler Prize demonstrated to me that my concerns are not only legitimate, but academic. Thank you, Drue, for lifting the veil of gaslighting through your unwavering support for making the personal political.

Maddie Orcutt '15, *Truman scholar*

Drue Cortell Gensler was a force. A Middlebury trustee, Drue was also a founder of Chellis House, a consistent advocate for GSFS (Women's Studies when she was involved with the program) and Theatre. A theatre graduate of Middlebury in the mid-50's, she was a fierce and insistent supporter of women and was unafraid to call those she supported to account. Drue was life-enhancing and beautifully abrasive.

Cheryl Faraone, *Professor of Theater*

Generously funded by Drue Gensler, my internship at Access Living opened me up to the world of possibilities present within the contemporary disability-rights movement, and was a vital moment for me in terms of experiencing theory meeting praxis. I got the opportunity to co-develop a workshop on the intersections of the prison-industrial complex and what we did argue is likewise the "nursing home-industrial complex," bringing together activists fighting against both spheres to see what common links could be forged. Six years later, I'm still using those skills in my anti-oppression efforts while considering careers in nonprofit work and community libraries.

Melian Radu '12, *MFA in poetry, University of Iowa, supported by the Gensler summer internship fund*

I first met Drue at Chellis House when I was a sophomore. We chatted a bit about Afghanistan and women's rights in the country. The next thing I learned was that she wanted to be involved in the Initiative to Educate Afghan Women (IEAW). We would meet often at the IEAW events swapping Middlebury stories and talking about creating opportunities for women's education over Afghan food and tea. I found her to be a compassionate, caring, and giving individual with a loving smile. She strongly believed in empowering women through education and she did her part in making

the dream of getting quality education a reality for many young Afghan women. I have fond memories of Drue and I know she will be missed greatly.

Zohra Safi '09, *Barrister & Solicitor, Toronto*

It was a real honor to receive the 2013 Fraker Prize, in memory of such a beloved Middlebury student and made possible by the equally beloved and passionate Drue Gensler. Being recognized for my junior history thesis on Mexican-American masculinity was an exciting affirmation that gender history really matters, and it even encouraged me to pursue a career in this field. The award also brought me closer to the wonderful people and activities at the Chellis House, which I remember as one of those rare places on campus that was somehow entirely comforting while also fully intellectually rigorous.

Caroline Kahlenberg '14, *PhD student in the Department of History and Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University*

As a women's studies minor, I often wondered if I would ever feel fluent in feminist theory. Winning the Fraker Prize validated my critical voice as an emerging feminist. In addition to being a wonderful honor at the time, it influenced my decision to pursue women's studies as part of my doctoral work.

Kate Silbert '08, *PhD in History and Women's Studies, University of Michigan*

I was saddened to hear about Drue Gensler's passing. I found my first true campus home in the GSFS Program and at Chellis House. These two places offered thoughtful and critical opportunities for scholarship and leadership that have left a lasting impression on me.

In 2010, I was privileged to receive money from Chellis House to spend the summer in Chicago, working as a Legal Intern with the Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois (TJLP). That summer changed my life. As a queer, gender non-conforming young person of color, it was an extraordinary opportunity to witness communities and organizations in Chicago grappling with and organizing around many of the issues and identities that I embodied and/or stood in solidarity with.

That summer, I helped found a volunteer-run program that streamlined the legal name change process in Chicago and helped make the experience more affirming, accessible, and affordable for trans and gender non-conforming people seeking legal name changes in the city. I also had the opportunity to learn more about how community organizing worked in Chicago. I gained lifelong mentors and connected with incredible queer, immigrant, and disability advocacy organizations in the city who were doing groundbreaking work alongside TJLP.

It's been seven years since my first summer in Chicago. After graduating from Middlebury, I moved back to the city and was hired at Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago, where I now work as the Manager of Youth Organizing. I spend my time running youth leadership programs and organizing with immigrant and refugee teenagers in Chicago Public Schools. My work is firmly rooted in a queer feminist politic whose foundations lie in the opportunities for theory and praxis that Chellis House and the GSFS Program afforded me. I am grateful for these resources, and am certain that Drue Gensler's legacy will live on as long as these spaces exist for other motivated and inspired students to access.

Viveka Ray-Mazumder '11, *Manager of Youth Organizing, Advancing Justice-Chicago, supported by the Gensler summer internship fund*

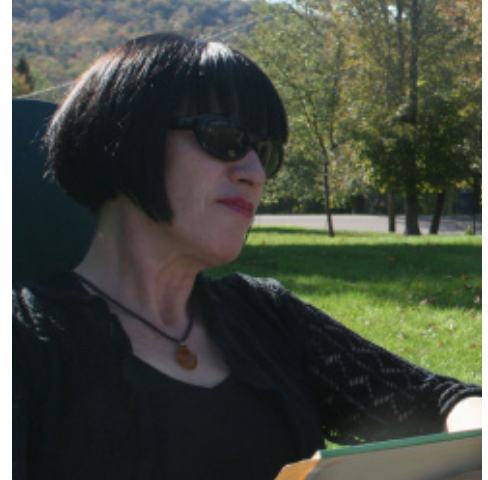


Sassy and classy – we will all greatly miss Drue.

Remembering Juana Gamero de Coca

On October 6th of 2017, our beloved friend and colleague, Juana Gamero de Coca died unexpectedly. Juana was a fierce feminist scholar whose research and teaching reflected this. Her books included *Nación y género en la invención de Extremadura: Soñando fronteras de cielo y barro* (Mirabel, 2005), *La mirada monstruosa de la memoria* (Libertarias, 2009), and *Sexualidad, violencia y cultura* (Desde Abajo, 2013). She often cross-listed courses with GSFS, including Gender and Violence in the Hispanic World and Sex, Violence and Culture. Juana was an active participant in the life of gender studies on campus. Juana's enthusiastic participation in everything from a Mellon symposium on "Queering the Liberal Arts" to job searches

was just how she rolled; when there was feminist work to be done, Juana would do what was needed to ensure that feminist studies thrived at Middlebury. She also modeled that feminist commitment in her classrooms where her students learned to think critically and deeply about gender, nation, colonialism, globalization and desire. The week after Juana's death, so many of the young feminist activists on campus shared with me just how deeply Juana had changed their life as a teacher, but also as a human being who was always there with a smile, a hug, and a witty aside. And Juana did all this feminist work—the committees, the teaching, the research and writing—with more panache than anyone we have ever known. Like Bella Abzug's famous hats, Juana's



Juana Gamero de Coca.

flair entered the room before her and left an impression long after she was gone. It is Juana's fierce feminist flair as well as her incredibly insightful scholarship that will be her legacy here in Chellis and GSFS.

Laurie Essig

*Professor of Gender, Sexuality,
and Feminist Studies*

Three Moments With Juana

I. We are walking away from Columbus Circle and she gently put her hand on mine. "Gracias por todo," she gave me a kiss on the right cheek. She held my hand just long enough to remind me that she was not culturally American. She liked making contact with human beings. Her sense of personal space and proximity reminded me of home. We joked about the appropriate number of feet (or was it meters?) between

two people having a conversation. I wondered if my scratchy beard had bothered her.

II. Juana had just returned from visiting her daughter in the province of Darién in Panamá. She reminded me of a feminist Ulysses. The trip had inspired her to seek a new world. Her scholarship was a response to that impulse to create a more humane world.

III. Exhausted after the election, she wondered if Bernie could really have been "the one." She recognized the signs of fascism and its connection to gender violence before the hash tags. Where did her unwavering support for the students come from? Where did it go? Where is it now?

Darién J. Davis,

Professor of History

In Memory of *Stanley Bates*, Professor Emeritus

Reflections from two individuals who knew and admired Stanley Bates.

There are many amazing things to be said about Stan Bates. Everything from his insatiable intellectual curiosity and encyclopedic mind that allowed him to engage in invigorating conversations, to his incredible commitment to the mission of the college, to his enduring kindness and deep integrity that was appreciated by colleagues, students, and friends alike. He always incurred our deepest respect.

Lesser known perhaps, was his unfailing support for the growth of first Women's Studies, then Women's and Gender Studies, and finally, our present configuration of Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies. Although he didn't teach many classes explicitly labeled under gender studies, he was extremely

well-versed in feminist theory, and he shared that knowledge with his students and his colleagues. Stan made significant contributions to the intellectual life of GSFS. For years, he was a mainstay of the gender studies faculty reading group, alongside Peggy

Nelson, Carol Rifelj, and Cheryl Faraone among others. When I first arrived at Middlebury in 1996 as a young feminist philosopher, this group of faculty that met regularly to discuss the latest work in feminist theory and gender studies was my intellectual lifeline, as it was for many junior faculty who took part. Stan was also a model of how to be a male feminist: very involved in the issues and discussions, but never taking center stage or assuming that he shared the same experiences as the women with whom he was working.

Stan was also an important mentor to the junior women in the philosophy department. For me, whose research was specifically in feminist philosophy, it is in large part due to Stan that I was able to focus on developing my work without having to worry about whether it would be respected by my department colleagues or considered 'real' philosophy that would 'count' for tenure. It was a time when most philosophy departments were still quite hostile toward the idea of feminist philosophy, and as I

compared notes over the years with peers trying to establish themselves in philosophy departments at other schools, it became clear to me just how lucky I was to have Stan as a supportive senior colleague who set the standard for our department culture.

I am filled with gratitude to Stan for his role in making Middlebury College a better place for women, and a better place to explore the intellectual issues of GSFS. I will miss him dearly.

Heidi Grasswick, *George Nye & Anne Walker Boardman Professor of Mental and Moral Science*

For many years I naively imagined that Stan was active in what was then the Women's Studies Program only because he knew we were on to something important. It took some time for me to realize something additional was at work: he truly wanted to offer each and every one of us—and our venture as a whole—meaningful support. It also took some time for me to realize that his actions must

have required sacrifice and fortitude: for years he was the only man in our reading group and often the only man at our meetings and scheduled events; at the very least he must have occasionally wondered what he was doing there. Yet there he was: helping

us figure out how to approach the administration and our recalcitrant colleagues; bringing his encyclopedic knowledge to bear on our readings; teaching us how to read and think.

My gratitude extends still further. From start to finish Stan made me feel respected at Middlebury College. He treated me as a peer even though he was my senior colleague with considerable power over my career. (He was on the Committee on Reappointment at least once—and I think it was more than once—when I came up for reviews.) I thought this was special treatment. But in the past couple of weeks I've learned that I was probably naïve about that as well. It turns out that I was far from being alone: Stan offered steadfast support to scores of his younger colleagues and loyal companionship to scores of those who were his peers. We are all diminished by this loss.

Peggy Nelson, *Professor Emerita of Sociology*



Stan & Virginia Bates, Peggy Nelson

The 2017 Feminist of the Year Awards



From left to right:
Professor Carly Thomsen, Morgan Grady-Benson '18, Sarah Karerat '18, Jingyi Wu '17, Katie Preston '17, and librarian Katrina Spencer.

On May 13, 2017, the Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies Program and Chellis House, the Women's Resource Center, celebrated all the nominees for the Feminist of the Year Award. Nominees and celebrants were able to gather in the backyard of Chellis House as the sun was shining before the big rain hit the area for the weekend. This year, close to 50 students, staff, and faculty members were nominated. After a poetry performance by Tabitha Mueller and Matthew Blake, the awards were handed out. Carly Thomsen was distinguished as the faculty Feminist of the Year. A first-year tenure-track member of the Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies Program, Professor Thomsen was especially commended for making her courses sites of feminist praxis by requiring her students to do engaged research projects. Students staged a 5K run

to raise awareness about reproductive rights and critically examined feminist science in a public forum. Carly Thomsen also served as the advisor to the Queer Studies Academic Interest House and helped make it a more active and engaged space on campus.

Katrina Spencer was distinguished in the staff category. Even though she only joined the library staff as recently as February 2017, Katrina has already made an impact on this campus. She organized the Blowtorch Reading Series in which community members get together once a month to read aloud from the most important texts of our times that address human rights and responsibilities. For this purpose, she has also arranged constantly rejuvenating displays in the library that feature important works for

Women's History Month. She also has made the library more visible in social media during the "Teachable Tuesdays" series on Facebook, reading two minute quotes with students and her colleagues from thought provoking books.

Five students garnered the prize this year. Morgan Grady-Benson '18 was distinguished for her work for "Stares & Stairs," a performance art group that draws attention to sexual assault and misogyny at parties at Middlebury.

Sarah Karerat '18 was honored for her work with the Vagina Monologues, which she directed, produced and acted in in 2017. A leading organizer of JusTalks, she also volunteers and serves on the board of WomenSafe.

Sandra Luo '18 was honored for her work as co-president of Women of Color, which she turned into a welcoming and thought-provoking space for students to come

together. Sandra also was the prime force behind organizing a series of events to raise awareness and funds for Standing Rock, thus bringing together gender activism and environmental justice.

Katie Preston '17 was honored for her many years of service of raising awareness about sexual violence. A member of the Sexual Assault Oversight Committee in

her first two years, she has also been a driving force behind It Happens Here, a national speak-out platform against sexual violence.

Another leading member of It Happens Here, Jingyi Wu '17 was also honored for her feminist work. Jingyi has been a vocal about feminist issues over the past four years, appearing in various productions of the Vagina Monologues and

shining a light on feminism in China. In 2017, she brought to campus Lu Pin, the founder of "Feminist Voices," the leading feminist publication in China.

All of the winners and the nominees gave attendees of the celebration great hope that our future will continue to be just and equitable.



TOP LEFT: Sarah Karerat and Mary Thomas. TOP RIGHT: Students chillin' at Chellis. CENTER RIGHT: Austin Kahn, Sam Boudreau, Katrina Spencer, Laurie Essig, Erin Work. BOTTOM LEFT: The late and beloved Juana Gamero de Coca, a nominee for the faculty Feminist of the Year Award.



Cultural Currency Between Empowerment and Commodification of Black Women's Beauty

By Treasure Brooks '21

On September 28, 2017, following her public dialogue with feminist Katha Pollitt, Janell Hobson, Associate Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at SUNY-Albany, delivered a lecture entitled "Cultural Currency Between Empowerment and Commodification of Black Women's Beauty." The talk centered around the representation of black women in mainstream media and the overall politicization and exploitation of black bodies. Using Beyoncé and Rihanna as her case studies, Hobson demonstrated how black women in the entertainment industry contort their image to fit the demand of the consumer. She argued that this image manipulation manifests itself in the form of either white washing—editing one's skin to be lighter or adopting traditionally European features—or what Hobson referred to as "orientalism," the globalization of one's body by appealing to multiple cultures and possessing no ethnically-distinct features.

The latter half of the lecture interrogated representation ethics that call for more diversity within the entertainment and beauty industries. Hobson suggested that the promotion of East African



Laurie Essig, Katha Pollitt and Janell Hobson speaking in Wilson Hall.

beauty aesthetics, though a form of diverse representation, actually harbors overtones of colonialism. She cited German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl to illustrate how Africanized aesthetics are often exploited for the sake of white spectatorship. Riefenstahl notoriously photographed the Nuba tribe of Africa, whom she believed possessed the ideal black bodies. Hobson used Riefenstahl's images to convey how black bodies are viewed through an anthropological rather than an erotic lens, making their nudeness open to the public for viewing,

scrutinization, and disposal. Hobson urged her audience to view the representation of black women in pop culture with a critical eye; she illuminated how even as beauty and fashion industries racially diversify, colonialism, exoticism, and fetishization still manipulate black women's images to be more digestible for anti-black consumers. This begs the question of whether representation within formerly anti-black industries can truly be empowering to black women, or simply exploitative.



The Sorcery of Color

Race, Gender, and Genocide in Brazil

By Cara Eisenstein '18

On Monday, October 9th, in an event co-sponsored by the Department of History, Spanish and Portuguese, the Academic Enrichment Fund, Latin American Studies, and the Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies, renowned activist and scholar Elisa Larkin Nascimento visited Middlebury College to talk about her advocacy work at the Director of the Afro-Brazilian Studies and Research Institute (IPEAFRO), located in Rio de Janeiro, and her research on race, gender, and genocide in Brazil—what she terms the “Sorcery of Color.”

As an introduction, Elisa Larkin Nascimento engaged the audience with information about her background in activism, which began during her undergraduate years at Princeton University campaigning for the institutional divestment of its assets in South Africa. She has since spent decades advocating for the rights of Afro-Brazilians through the IPEAFRO institute, which focuses on promoting knowledge and

providing education about Afro-Brazilian culture, illuminating the memory of this group’s struggle for rights in Brazil, leading the fight against racism, and fostering a vision of Afro-Brazilian self-confidence.

In the lecture, Nascimento unpacked the ideal of a “racial democracy” promoted in Brazil, which, through cultivating the image of a benevolent society, theorizes that notions of African inferiority and racial determinism have supposedly been wiped out by special race relations. She described how this notion stems from a social context of high levels of cultural assimilation and *mestizaje*; such an environment is thought to be incompatible with racism. In reality, however, the “color criterion” that operates in Brazil, though markedly different from a Eurocentric conception of a racial society hierarchy, functions as a pigmentocracy, where those with the darkest skin are lowest on the social scale and face extensive discrimination in society.

Nascimento described how, on the surface, the societies of Brazil and other Latin American countries appear to consist of a harmonious “semblance of fusion and conviviality,” characterized by “religious syncretism and cultural assimilation.” Nascimento’s research and advocacy has shown, however, that this “non-racialized facade” only serves to further conceal the violent repression of Afro-Brazilian people and culture. In her activism and published work, she exposes the contemporary oppression of Afro-Brazilians in part through

tracing the historical roots of racism in Brazilian society; Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, in 1888, and eugenic principles were officially inscribed in the constitution and therefore able to legally impact immigration policy as recently as the mid-1940s. Nascimento provided numerous other examples, such as the stereotyping of black culture in major literary works; the appropriation of the work of black artists; and the oppression of African religious worship to propose that the social fabric of racism is deeply ingrained in Brazilian society and that repressed racism is able to operate daily due to the absence of a discourse on race in mainstream society.

Gender also plays an important role in Nascimento’s research; she utilizes an intersectional approach in her analysis of the sorcery of color because she is “convinced that the issue of race cannot be understood without looking at the issue of gender.” In the lecture, she demonstrated how a veneer of intermarriage and respectability masks the true foundation of the relations that lead to miscegenation—the sexual exploitation of black women. Nascimento concluded her lecture by remarking on the legacy of Abdias Nascimento, the Afro-Brazilian activist largely responsible for building this movement, and by discussing the powerful activity being done today through IPEAFRO to challenge and end the repression of Afro-Brazilian people and culture.

Alum Carolyn Birsky '10.5 Gives Career Talk

By Meiriely Amaral '19

On Friday, November 3, 2017 I attended a lunch conversation held at the Chellis House by alumna Carolyn Birsky '10.5 titled "Pursuing My Passions - With a Degree in Feminist Studies." Carolyn was a psychology major with what was then a Women's and Gender Studies minor. She shared how upon graduation she thought she wanted to be a therapist but was not ready to go back to school so went into sales. During this time, she saw how her feminist studies experience helped her feel more comfortable speaking up and navigating male spaces. At a certain point, she wanted to move out of sales, and decided to become a life coach. She now has her own life and career coaching business. This work combines both her academic concentrations, psychology and WAGS. As Carolyn was leaving sales, she realized she was not the only one in her 20s going through job changes and decided to help other women like her. She specializes in helping women have a meaningful job search, highlighting how it is very easy to approach this endeavor with a "take what you can get" mentality. It was refreshing to see someone who has gone down a different path than expected by doing something they enjoy and that fits their interests.



Carolyn Birsky '10.5 addresses students in Coltrane Lounge.

Compass Maven

Based in Boston, Carolyn Birsky's company **Compass Maven** is a blog and life coaching service designed to help women in their twenties optimize their lives and careers. Clients can work with Birsky either through one-on-one coaching, usually conducted over the phone or via skype, or during workshops that she frequently holds in the Boston area. Client testimonials attest that Birsky's services have allowed them to "live more positively", "feel capable", and "celebrate the small wins."

compassmaven.com

5 tips for a purposeful job search

Stop thinking about all of the "shoulds" and get clear on what's important to YOU before you actually start applying for jobs.

Decide how you want to feel every day at work and what qualities of a job will make you excited to go to work.

Get clear on what strengths, skills and traits you have that you want to bring to your job (and would make you awesome for it).

Create an elevator pitch of what you're looking for out of a job - help people help you find something that's a great fit.

Network! Start talking to people about what they do, sharing what you're looking for and using the Middlebury network to explore what jobs are out there and get your foot in the door.

Russian Mothers and the Choices of Childbirth

By Taite Shomo, '2020.5



Anna Temkina. Photo courtesy of the European University at St. Petersburg.

On Tuesday, October 3, 2017, Russian sociologist Anna Teminka visited Middlebury College to speak about her research on motherhood and childbirth in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Teminka explained that, in contemporary Russia, free medical services are provided by the government for all Russian citizens; these services include neonatal care and child-birthing assistance. Less than half of Russian women, however, will choose to pay for additional medical care before and during the birthing process. Teminka interviewed both women who chose to spend their own money to give birth in private maternity hospitals, as well as women who chose to give birth in general wards in state hospitals.

Teminka found that women who chose to pay for child-birthing services were all upper or upper middle class married women, most of whom were professionals with their own sources of income. These women saw themselves as

responsible mothers who would do anything for their children, including spending money to give birth in a private hospital. Many of these women also believed that the general hospital wards were unsafe and presented dangers to both mothers and unborn children. Though it was often a struggle for these mothers to pay the costs for additional services, Teminka explained, they saw the money as a good investment in their children's health and safety as well as their own.

Conversely, women who chose to give birth in the state hospitals were lower middle class women, many of whom were part-time workers or non-workers. These mothers believed that healthy women with healthy babies do not need additional services, and that delivery is a very normal process that can be performed in general wards without issue. Teminka learned that the women who chose not to pay for additional

care concluded that they did not have enough money to pay for what they saw to be superfluous services, and chose to spend that money on other necessities, such as a larger apartment or products for their children.

Teminka also discovered that there is a large disparity in the way that women viewed the Russian health care system, and that these views were directly related to whether or not they chose to pay for child-birthing services. Women who did give birth in private maternity hospitals believed that free medical health care was not good, and were generally uninterested in collective health and welfare. Women who gave birth in general hospital wards, however, believed in the obligation of citizens to pay taxes and the obligation of the state to use tax dollars to provide services to their citizens.

Despite their differences in choices about childbirth, Teminka concluded that all of the women with whom she spoke cared deeply about their children. She found that all mothers make choices about their pregnancy and childbirth of their own agency, make decisions about what is best for them and their children, and take responsibility of the situation to ensure what they believe will be the best experience. Though their methods may be different, at the end of the day, says Teminka, women who pay for child-birthing services and women who do not have the same goal in mind: the health and safety of themselves and their unborn children.



Steps Towards Reproductive Justice: A 5K

By Meiriely Amaral '19

On Saturday, October 8, 2017 I attended the 2017 Steps Toward Reproductive Justice: A Middlebury 5K. We started off outside Axinn, looped through the golf course and came back. It had been raining earlier in the morning, but luckily we did not get wet. I had planned to walk the 5K with a good friend. A majority of the people ran it, but my friend and I found one more walking companion, biology professor Susan DeSimone. It is funny how things happen: as we walked the 5K we had an interesting conversation. There are not many professors I interact with outside of the classroom setting, and I usually do not interact with any biology or science professors. Yet, there we were: three women walking a 5K and having a conversation. Along the 5K there were signs with facts about reproductive justice and as we walked we would comment on some of them. One of the facts that stood out to me was how many anti-reproductive control measures have been passed since January 2017. I remember the number to be above 50. It was a sobering fact to see. We had a discussion on reproductive justice, and the professor shared how her mother's experience was vastly different than the one we have today. Her mother's doctor broke the rules by giving her birth control without her husband's approval. It felt great to ruminate on how far we have come, but troubling at the same time to see facts and statistics showing how many steps different state governments are taking to restrict reproductive rights.



Co-Organizers: Miranda de Beer, Mika Morton, Cicilia Robison; Participant: Hannah Redmon (left to right)



One of many factual signs laid upon the runners' route.



Runners at the starting line.



Co-Organizers: Mika Morton & Cicilia Robison (left to right)